SIGNET

Signet

Queens College
Charlotte, North Carolina
1982

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
North Carolina Digital Heritage Center

https://archive.org/details/signet19821982quee

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Reconciliation — Tonya Wertz 4
Vintage 1962 — Brenda Brockway 5
Stonehenge — Ann Matthews 5
Generalities: Male and Female — Mary Nethercutt 6
So - You've Paid . . . — Sarah Morison 6
Disappointment — Pam Heinig 6
Don Juan — Colleen Turnage 7
For Women Only — Rowena Gregg 7
Dump — Joan Oviatt 7
"She Fell On Her Head" — Margaret Kelso 8
Child's Crayola Portrait — Mary Nethercutt 8
Now is the Gathering Time — Ann Matthews 8
Birds, Bees and Brothers — Tonya Wertz 9
Jealousy — Brenda Brockway 11
Last of the Nights — Mary Nethercutt 11
Defiance — Edith Busbee 11
Beth — Erin Ryan 11
Songs — Margaret Kelso 12
Wish — Colleen Turnage 12
The First Commandment — Tonya Wertz 12
John Mac — S. Ashlin Looney 12
Montage — Edith Busbee 13
The Wreck of the St. Mary — Mary Lou Waterstradt 14
Dream — Erin Ryan 14
Fantasy I — Tonya Wertz 14
Oh My God . . . — Loretta Callan 15
One Clean Swipe . . . — Sarah Morison 15
Puppy-Blue — Mary Nethercutt 16
Behind Transparent . . . — Brenda Brockway 16
A Milk Clean . . . — S. Ashlin Looney 16
The Baby Pain — Pam Heinig 17
The Bonjour — Brenda Brockway 18
Solomon — Ann Matthews 19
A Sick Rose — Brenda Brockway 19
Between You and I — Colleen Turnage 20
Deja Vu — Brenda Brockway 20
Dress Code — Erin Ryan 21
Tempted By The . . . — S. Ashlin Looney 21
Never Assume . . . — Sarah Morison 22
I've Heard Tales . . . — Brenda Brockway 22
Closest To You — Tonya Wertz 22
Wencil and Wencilinda — Cathy Justis 23
Chapter One . . . — Brenda Brockway 24

RECONCILIATION

I

In late summer
while hot air cracked
like a whip on
humid sidewalks

you called out of
a cloudless blue
and asked if
there was any

chance for a
reconciliation.
Twice burned,
afraid to rest

her hand on a
hot stove, she
steals a seventy
-five cents long

distance pause . . .
as you with
surgical mastery
explain you've had

four thousand and sixty
nights to think
and of course
you know

this must come
as a surprise
but you
were wondering . . .

II

Saccharine aftertaste
deja vu begins
gangrene streaks
to her heart . . .

She remembers
first the stale
bitter taste of coins
in sweaty palms --

acrid smoldering
ashes waiting to
burst into Phoenix,
- aborted rebirth -

ache echoing from
caverns of her heart --
pain twists her but,
silencing initial reactions . . .

VIII

Four years this past June
Rusty record speaks cleanly
    Not one slip
Not one backwards trip
    into a bourbon past
of missed appointments --
    totaled Monte Carlos --
    near nervous breakdowns --
    bleary-eyed Mondays --
    vomit-quenched sheets --
    backwash of bull shit --
    shaky de-tox mornings
when the bed shook --
    an electric headache --

Sidestep my anger
towards a childish you
like I used to avoid cracks
in the sidewalk --
I never wanted to break Mother's back . . .

IX

First time in four years
doubt etches a diamond
cut into my mind . . .

Consider cancelling a trip
to see you - afraid to see you --
the old you --
the jellyfish you --
drifting
    goalless --
Still
    stinging to the touch . . .

Post-Miami depression.
Day after Christmas
You call the family you
downed like a shot of whiskey --

Happy Holidays . . .

Tonya Wertz

(Signet Creative Writing Award — First Place Poetry)

"VINTAGE 1962"

Light from the "volume turned down" television shadowed your face as we sat on the cold floor and tried to keep warm in our distance by drinking wine I'd been saving for a "special occasion." "I've been waiting" on the radio as we share a symbolic smile hoping the other was feeling that overwhelming "I love you, don't hurt me" sensation. I remember shaking (I was nervous not cold) as we watched the U.S. Marines march to the National Anthem and listened to the Little River Band tell us to "Take it Easy" on each other, before the shadow on your face disappeared and the music in the air became faint as you told me you loved me. I told you I loved you and tucked away "special occasion" memories in an empty wine bottle.

Brenda Brockway

(Signet Creative Writing Award — Second Place Poetry)

STONEHENGE REVISITED

I

On the high altar stood my mother,
arms stretched skyward,
thighs spread,
so the summer solstice sun,
rising over the heel stone,
touched her hips and breasts.

Other priestesses circled the stones
chanting, inviting the light
with pelvic upthrusts,
reaching hands.

Common Celts milled and murmured,
awed by the sacred ceremony.
The chosen young lord stood ready,
phallus bravely raised
for the fertility rite,
then the ultimate mystery.

A chilling breeze swirled groundfog
over the Salisbury Plain.

II

Before Christ, almost before God,
there was the source,
Mother, human counterpart
of earth, who gives away her life
for life

And nurtures small things;
tends, strokes, nestles,
inspires, teaches, defends.
She is the originator
of immortality.

She is strong for the right reasons,
wise beyond knowledge,
tenacious of survival.
Her DNA informs her brain
she should be proud.

Freud was a man.
There's no such thing as
penis envy.

III

Stonehenge mysteries, mother values
are being relearned by former
"me firsters."
Sixty thousand questionnaires later,
Gail Sheehy says to would-be Pathfinders
giving means getting and hardship
begets strength.
"Others-oriented" is not a bad word.
Don't hug yourself too close
lest you smother.
Risk and grow
like crocuses in the snow.

IV

So now
my mother reaches down
with her hand,
lifting me beside her
to Stonehenge's high altar.

We stretch to receive the light
of summer solstice sun
rising over the heel stone.

We are who we become.

And a gentle wind swirls groundfog
over the Salisbury Plain.

Ann Matthews

(Signet Creative Writing Award — Third Place Poetry)

GENERALITIES — MALE AND FEMALE

Part One — Male
Not to Generalize -
the male race,
cloaked by their male pride,
armored with masculinity,
ride above feminine emotion,
unaffected and seemingly aloof,
actually cower behind their vanity,
afraid to be exposed
for fear of being caught
in their bared equality
and toppled from the pedestal of
male apathy
in full view of their peers.
Not to Generalize —
they hide from confrontation
in a guise quite transparent,
gloating in superiority
at their ability to manipulate
because we, of the opposite gender,
can't do without them.
When, in actuality,
behind the transparent guise
of their shabby strength,
the thought of lonliness
is impossible to handle,
And so banished —
and stored in that vast place
in the heart and mind
known as weakness,
synonymous with humaness.
And if they do per chance slip
and show something
of what lies behind the mask,
it is quickly sheathed in
cold contradiction,
and hidden away forever,
in the maleness of it all.

Part Two — Female
Not to Generalize —
I see the female race
revolving around me
in separate circles
of sameness,
None so different to be
truly individual.
For it is in the mesh of commoness
that we are bound together
by our feminity.
The difference lies
behind the smiles,
behind the affected innocence,
behind the shield of bitterness,
behind the constant envy,
all cowering in corners of indecision,
afraid to be the instigator.
The brave only, willing
to dive behind the male curtain
and part the differences,
leaving both bare in their equality
before the window of the world.

Mary Nethercutt

So - you've paid your debts
Interest
free
Miscalculated that
5-dollar accounts of
counterfeit "commitments"
remain
Unbalanced

Sarah Morison

disappointment

occasionally, i go out on a safari
not to hunt big game
i just window-shop for diversion
and then return home unaffected
i don't usually fall for the macho type either
but he sat down two tables away
and propped his jaw in hand
he looked rather like richard burton
playing a brooding caesar
wearing a gray flannel suit
i must confess his comely appearance
did give me cause to question my motives
but i did weigh thoughts of consequences
as i swirled a straw through my daiquiri
i came to the conclusion
that i was probably fascinated from afar
and that we would not be interested in each other
were we
closer
soon, his like companion entered the bar
and caesar, grinning, waved his yellow handkerchief
but, that wasn't the reason
i finished my daiquiri in disillusionment
caesar was a soprano

Pam Heinig

DON JUAN

Your hard brown eyes
like a multitude of octopus hands
follow the lines of my body
all over
but really they're soft brown
a blanket that warms, protects me
a soft, cool breeze that slips past
my defenses
they slip past my mouth
past my throat
and settle a kiss
your eyes smile at the thought

Your hands are your tools
they are your eyes really
dormant strength
they relay the message
you are ready to learn my topography
but my eyes won't let you
you see
your image there
it puzzles you
it frightens me
your hands pause and wait
for me to lead you on

Your lips are classic
a Hellenistic achievement
they voice the words
your eyes tell me
they touch the places
your hands touch me
but always in thought
the silence of your words
haunts me

Your thoughts
a shower of warmth
shivers along my spine
around my waist
they settle in my belly
like a gutted candle flame
I nurture your thoughts
water them with my own tears
hoping I'll bring
us to life
hoping we'll burn
together
one day

Colleen Turnage

FOR WOMEN ONLY

When by chance
Love comes to you lady
Let it hold you
And take you where it may
And believe only in being content

And when by chance
Love comes to you lady
Let it stay as freely as it came
Dare not to touch its fragility
And believe only that it is fate

And when by chance
Love comes to you lady
Don't look in his eyes too long
And try not to touch his heart
And believe only in your own strength

And when by chance
Love leaves you lady
Cry and relearn so you'll remember
That grows only in a man's hands
And believe in your right to freedom

Rowena Gregg

DUMP

i took out the garbage yesterday.
you were the balled-up Hardee's bag
with the used packet of grape jelly
stuck inside
actually, it was the maid
who took out the trash.
we pay them.
i didn't give you a second thought.
until i saw the bag.
going out with the trash.
and i thought it may make a good
poem.
our relationship wasn't worth
much more, anyway.

i need to take the garbage out
at home, too.

Joan Oviatt

"SHE FELL ON HER HEAD"

"She fell on her he-ad."
They stretched the word
into two syllables rolling
around crooked teeth like wind
among abandoned rows of tombstones
in an ancient graveyard.

A young man in white grabbed her limp form --
her arms and legs spilling over
like too much laundry in his struggling arms --
and ran to the cold metal room.

Steel and tile grinned and winked
while antiseptic perfumed the air.
Cool metal checks her frozen chest for sound.
Silence.
Warm breath attacked her icy lungs.
Stillness
Soft hands pumped her quiet chest.
No use.

"Stay with her," he said,
but I wonder why.
She needs no one now
and I do not wish to see.
Small, so small,
and thin.
("Mama, I'm hungry.")

I stand like the guards of the unknown soldier.
Does temptation ever tickle them?
Do they think as they walk, turn, walk,
of leaving their posts?
Do they think of the thousand emptied lives
around them,
or of breakfast, girls and over-due books?

Perhaps if I did not look . . .
But, I remember
the brown frost of dirt on the tiny form,
and the smell of earth and coal stoves.
("Mama, I'm cold.")

Does it honor her, my vigil here?
Is my pain owed for hers?
Will they forget me and I will stand
this guard forever?

Bruises, blue and brown decorate
the cool soft skin
One on her boney arm, another on her
lifeless leg
And another still, above her eye.
It's nearly gone.
("Please, Pa, don't hit me.")

"She was playing and she fell on her he-ad,"
they say
Smiling, shoulders shrugging.

I guard her
Reading her life in her tiny shape.
Don't they see she needs no one now?
Don't they see she will never
fall on her head again?

Margaret Kelso

CHILD'S CRAYOLA PORTRAIT

Canary yellow sun chirps down
on cotton candy white clouds
surrounded by blue velvet sky.
Grass lies like a carpet,
yellow green,
from which sprout crayola flowers,
rose-poppy and daffodil blue.
Coloring book birds,
like double-hump seagulls,
fly cardinal red from the page.
Kindergarten images,
drawn heavy-handed
on the wide eyes of a child.

Mary Nethercutt

NOW IS THE GATHERING TIME

Now is the gathering time.
Wild strawberries fill my hat,
crush themselves with their own weight,
drip their sweet blood through my crown
Plums, yellow-turning-to-red,
red-turning-to-purple,
(the overripe color that brings the yellow jackets)
lie mellow in my apron,
already smelling like jelly.
For blackberries, I knot my kerchief
and pick more than I can carry
without spilling.
When I have plucked the best
from one briary arm,
there's another with more,
bigger, riper, better.
Scratched and chigger-chewed,
I think of cobbler.

Huckleberries - little purple jewels -
are 20 to the handful
So I eat them all on the way home.

Ann Matthews

BIRDS, BEES, AND BROTHERS

Last summer two things happened at my house. When Fifth Grade started, my paper "What I Did Over the Summer" was the best one in the whole class. Miss Dillstep gave me two stars that day -- a red one and a green one. Green is my favorite color because my eyes are green just like Scarlett O'Hara's. At least, that's what my Daddy says. He also tells me to eat the skin of my baked potato when Mommy fixes them for dinner so I'll grow up to be pretty and break men's hearts.

Anyway, two really big things did happen at my house that summer. After a long time of being really fat, my mommy went to the hospital one Saturday and when she came home she wasn't fat anymore. Also, that very same week I got a brand new red swingset.

See, I knew why my mommy was so fat. It wasn't because she ate all the time and watched soap operas all day long or anything dumb like that. It was because she was pregnick. And I know how you get pregnick because my mommy and daddy and I had the talk right after mommy found out she was pregnick. You know, the "birds and bees" talk. Big deal.

I think the talk sorta embarrassed my daddy because he kept wiggling around in his chair and when I asked questions it was Mommy who answered them. They told me not to tell ANYONE, though, because when my friends' parents thought they were old enough to know they would tell them. So the next day when I went to school I felt SO smart! And I was about to POP to tell my best friend Sharon Smith. I KNOW Sharon didn't know about the birds and the bees, but I didn't tell her. I just sorta smiled to myself all day long, looked around the classroom, and wondered if anyone besides me KNEW! I even wondered if my teacher, Mrs. Villadonga knew, but I figured she did because she has a teenager. I think you can't get pregnick unless you know how to - it's sorta like riding a bike. You just don't KNOW how to ride one - someone has to show you and then you have to practice a lot before you really get the hang of it.

Anyway, I remember the day my mommy went to the hospital to get un-pregnick because it was a very strange day. My Aunt Baboo came over to our house real early that Saturday morning (before Bugs Bunny and everything), woke me up and took me over to her house. She said Mommy wasn't feeling very good and wanted me to play with Barbie at Aunt Baboo's.

I love to go over to Aunt Baboo's. I think when I grow up I want to be just like Aunt Baboo. She's really fun - she doesn't act like a grownup at all. She lets me build forts in the living room and make Barbie houses under the dining room table. At home whenever I get my Barbie house all fixed up in the den Mommy makes me clear it away because she says house in the middle of the Plaza or something and I'm not even allowed to play on Nassau Boulevard.

That Saturday Aunt Baboo was really nice to me. She let me eat Baby Ruths whenever I wanted to (she keeps them in the refrigerator so they're real cold and chewy) and she let me eat Captain Crunch cereal and watch cartoons in her big bed that has a roof on it. She didn't even get mad when Barbie knocked my bowl of milk all over the bedspread. But she did tell me to ask Barbie to try to be a little more carefuler.

After cartoons were over I got kinda bored. I had just finished making a real neat Barbie house between the dining room table and the piano when Aunt Baboo's cat Bethoven, came tearing around the corner and knocked down Barbie's living room wall. Well, when that happened, the whole house was ruined. I didn't feel like cleaning everything up, and Barbie was tired, so I just left everything where it was. Then I decided I wanted to talk to my mommy.

"Aunt Baboo," I said, "Can I call Mommy now?" I was on my sixth Baby Ruth.

"Honey, I don't think you can talk to her yet," she said.

"Why not? She's been there all day long. What's taking this baby so long, anyway? It's been kicking to get out for the longest time. I know, because Mommy let me feel it kick her last week after Girl Scouts," I said.

That's another thing I don't get about babies. What is the big deal about a baby who kicks you all the time? If I EVER kicked my mommy, even ONCE, I'd get in SO much trouble! I bet I'd get in worse trouble than the trouble I got into that time I decided I wanted bangs like Sharon Smith and Mommy wanted my hair all one length so I cut my own bangs myself.

"Can I just try to call her now? Just one time?" I asked.

"We'll see," Aunt Baboo said and went into the kitchen.

You know what it means when grownups say, "We'll see?" It means "NO." They just don't want you to start screaming and crying so they try to keep your hopes up a little bit longer.

I picked up Beethoven and took her outside to sit on the steps with me. I watched her chase ants for awhile, then I got bored. I was sitting on Aunt Baboo's front steps when Daddy drove up the street. He parked the car, ran up the steps two at a time, picked me up and tossed me into the air and told me I had a new baby brother. He was really excited. I was really mad.

I mean, I knew Mommy was at the Presbyterian Hospital all day long getting the baby and everything and everybody'd told me how fun it would be to have a real live baby to play with instead of Baby Tender-

even like the same cartoons I like and we'd fight over which shows to watch just like Sharon Smith and her bratty brother Scotty do. Probably he would throw up all over the house and have messy diapers and our bathroom would start smelling like the Asbury's bathroom. Mrs. Asbury is pregnick all the time, and their house always smells like diapers. I heard Mommy whisper that to Daddy one time when they were going to a party at the Asbury's, so I'm not the only one who thinks their house smells.

Daddy and Aunt Baboo were talking and were all excited and I just stood there. "I don't FEEL very good," I said and a little bit louder. I sniffed, too.

"What's the matter, sweetie?" Daddy asked and picked me up. Usually I don't like to be picked up because after all I WILL be in the Fifth Grade next year and it makes me feel like a baby or something. But I really didn't mind too much this time.

"I'm sick to my stomach," I said and clutched my tummy. "I think I'll stay here and be Aunt Baboo's little girl." Aunt Baboo doesn't have a little girl or a little boy but that's because she wasn't married to Uncle Jimmy yet and God doesn't give you babies until you get married. And then He usually waits a little while. So she just has a cat.

Anyway, everybody thinks Aunt Baboo is my mommy, because whenever we go places and old ladies hug me and tell me how sweet I am and ask how old I am, they always look at Aunt Baboo like she's my mommy. But that's because she has light brown hair like me and my Mommy's hair is black.

I hate it when old ladies do that - they always smell like Vicks and peppermint candy and they wear ugly black shoes like nurses wear and they have great big boobies that hang all the way down to their waists, just like Mrs. Willis, our choir director at church. I remember when Mommy told me why ladies wear bras - for support or something like that - and the next day at church I asked Mommy if Mrs. Willis wore a bra.

"Tamara Lynne," Aunt Baboo said, "You're my little girl too, but you need to go home and see your new baby brother! Aren't you excited?"

I just looked at them both, went into the kitchen, got three more Baby Ruths and sat down under the dining room table with Barbie and her messed-up house. I gave one of the Baby Ruths to Barbie but she didn't want it so I ate it for her. I pretended to play, but I was really listening to Aunt Baboo and Daddy whisper about me. Then Daddy came into the dining room and crawled right under the table with me and asked me if Barbie was ready to go home.

"Isn't she homesick?" he asked.

"Nope. Barbie likes Aunt Baboo, too," I said. "And she hates babies."

Daddy looked at me for a minute and didn't say anything. He looked kinda sad, like he looked the night Mrs. Holshouser ran over my old cat, Cindy, the night we went to the fair.

"Your Mommy missed you today, Tamara Lynne," he said.

"Well, I missed Mommy, too," I said and my voice got kinda shaky. For a minute I thought I was going to cry, but I didn't want Daddy to know it.

"Are you ready to come on home now?" he asked.

"I guess," I said. I picked up Barbie and her house, got two more Baby Ruths "for the road" (like Sharon Smith's big brother says when he gets a beer out of the refrigerator when Sharon's parents aren't home), kissed Aunt Baboo, petted Beethoven on her fuzzy head and walked down the front steps.

The whole way home I didn't say anything. I rolled down my window and looked out of it and waved at people in other cars until Daddy told me to stop hanging out the window. Then I played with the buttons on the radio and punched them real fast so that none of the songs went together and it sounded real funny. Daddy told me to leave the radio on one station or he would turn it off. Then I closed my eyes, pretended I was blind, and tried to guess where we were.

I started feeling sick to my stomach again when we turned onto our street. When we drove up the driveway, my stomach started to feel like it did the time I fell out of our cherry tree in the backyard and I couldn't get up for a minute. So I just sat there when Daddy stopped the car.

Daddy acted real cheerful like he does when we go to the dentist and said, "We're home, sweetie. Let's go see your brother, okay?"

"I think I'm going to throw up," I said.

"Did your Aunt let you eat junk food all day, Tamara Lynne?"

"No, Sir," I lied.

"Well, if you feel sick let's get you inside."

"I can't move. I'll throw up if I do. Really!" I said.

And I did. I sat right there in the front seat of our little white Renault, my door wide open and everything, and threw up. My daddy got pretty mad because he said I could have gotten out of the car at least, but I didn't care. I didn't want to go inside and throwing up was the only thing I could think of to do, so I did.

I felt much better after that, though. But mostly because I could see a new red swingset in my backyard! I got out of the car with Barbie, told her never to throw up in the car again, ran over to my swingset, slid down the sliding board just once and then raced Barbie inside to see Mommy and to meet my new baby brother.

Tonya Wertz

(Signet Creative Writing Award — First Place Short Story.)

JEALOUSY

Your eyes poured
with hurricane warning tears.
You, portraying a deaf,
me, imitating a mute.
The tornado was coming
(I hate to fight)
Our sign language
wasn't clear
until
wind gust,
thunder roared,
lightning struck.
Caught up in hazy emotions
in fleet from the storm,
I tripped into a puddle,
listened, as you spoke.
You watched while I cried,
opened your umbrella
in the eye of the storm --
peaceful.
"He didn't mean anything to me."
Wind calmed.
"You could forget her too."
Lightning vanished.

Sun shown through translucent clouds --
disappearing thunder
mellowed to a sensitive moan.
We dried each other's eyes --
promised if ever it looked like hail again,
we'd
invest in armored raincoats.

Brenda Brockway

LAST OF THE NIGHTS

ONCE upon a few short weeks ago,
there rode into reality
a knight on a white horse hero.
In her ivory tower shelter,
the princess expected him
and had for years
and would for years to come.
Eye to heart the world didn't stop.
Summer came and passed
and it wasn't as easy in the real world.
And winter came and passed --
life getting colder by degrees.
The prince has sold his armor
and the light's gone
out in the tower.
Love's diabetic;
she can't eat dreams.

Mary Nethercutt

DEFIANCE

I find what I need in a well-sealed jar.
Only well-sealed really isn't enough.
This jar is impolitely impermeable.
This ill-mannered urn defies me without
a single turn.
Twist. . .Bang-Bang. . .ugh. . .Twiiiissstttttt. Damn.
Hot water, yea, ok; More hot water?
The notches and nicks that the lid takes on
are forced against the stubborn hand, but
flesh gives way to the fixed force.
The chewed effect on the blood splotched palm
makes the twisting all for naught ---
Battling with a mayonnaise jar is one of life's
minor details.

Edith Busbee

BETH

Hiding behind a menthol smokescreen
trapped inside a Budweiser can
You fathom your world with
an old man's wisdom
tired wife's cynicism
the wonder of a child with a new toy
Southern Style
'ain't nothin' like it
wondering if the boots will last the year
if Willie will put out a live album
and how long till we go to the beach
Living from day to day
Laugh to tear
Smile to frown
and back again
Yankee Style
'I can handle it'
Wondering, why we're the way we are
not quite caring - until it's pointed out
Why doesn't the phone ring?
(we have call waiting and an answering service.)
with news from mama
or maybe someone she used to know
Oh well, better luck next time
there'll be others
But what counts is when I look up
through the smokescreen
past the Budweiser cans
and you're smiling back
Nothing is said - smiles are silent
You have to love someone to live with them
Yes you're the reason God made Oklahoma
and my life is that much easier.

Erin Ryan

SONGS

A Mother Song

Life-giver cried at each moment of growth:
Stay with me
Don't leave me alone.
I gave you life
Now make me whole.
Dream only my dreams
Sing only my songs.
I gave you life
Now make me whole

Give me your medals,
Your honors, your prizes.
Give me your thoughts
And your fantasy life.

I'll buy you your clothes
You'll dress in my colors
I'll order your life
You'll have my direction.

Tell of your loves
And each lingering kiss.
Tell me your heart-break
I'll cradle each tear.

A Daughter Song

Each time I am,
I paint a hurt upon your face.
Each time I try
You sing my many sins --
selfish, self-willed
self-centered, self determined.
Self.
My only choice is a good you
or a bad me.
Whose life then, do I take?

Margaret Kelso

WISH

I wished upon a star last night.
I wished for you.
The star turned out to be
a Boeing 737,
Landing at Douglas Municipal Airport.

Tough luck, kid.

Colleen Turnage

THE FIRST COMANDMENT: 1981

Ivory tower worshippers --
Noxzema Nuns
Submit to confession
before a Priest
who hears with hollow ears
who understands only
what he whispers at midnight
beneath curtainless stained glass . . .

Oh, kick your habits,
Unblemished Ones
Kneel before
a plastic money altar -
(And may the Lord bless you
and keep you
in the house you can't afford)

At the Gates of Wrath
Sing Ariel's Song of Pearls --
Pull the card from your wimple,
Simple Fools --
Only to find it
Expired.

Tonya Wertz

JOHN MAC

High society brat --
No class.
Spoiled and selfish --
Thinking before you act --
(Rarely after).

You've beat the best --
so what!
What's going to happen when
the knee goes,
the elbow winces?
And some spunky college junior-turned-pro
slams the ball down your throat
offering no apology..

Your actions disgust the
people who love
to hate you.
(wanted that all along).
Premeditated like the perfect murder,
Only in your case --
the murder is suicide.

S. Ashlin Looney

MONTAGE

Baker, a happy, smiling child certainly has her mother's blonde curly ringlets and a fevered zeal about anything she does. She plays with children her age, but fascinates the adults that seem always to be around. Her mother, the actress, (in the role of the charmer) surrounds herself with people on more ocassions than might be necessary. The house is big and roomy and follows all the Better Homes and Gardens guidelines for a "Homier Home, a delight for guests". Baker has never known any other home except this one; she was pinched and drawn, red, scaly, and demanding like all babies when she and her mother first met.

The day, (sometime in Autumn I should think) they met was a sterile one; a pre-arranged cameraman dressed in green hospital scrubs joked as he filmed for the mother, the actress, this joyous event. The pregnancy was right on cue, "How could it be anything else, but?" And so was Baker, right on cue -- bloody and slippery, with eyes that could smile and cry, tease and entertain, create and destroy all within one breath -- entering the scene and completing the prologue.

Welcome guests enjoy the house, old, oak, and oiled; it smells of middle eastern spices in some rooms, fresh baked wholewheat bread and French cocoa in others, and of fresh sprays of back-garden flowers, weeds, and magnolias in the more formal rooms. The bedroom has become a vital organ in the spirited body of the comfortable home. Its earthy clay-hued blues, greys, and pussy willow browns are cello-like in tone; flowing and soothing. Sheets in water-colours spill dramatically from the unmade bed, over the antique breakfast tray with rave reviews on it, and on to the polished floor. There are pillows everywhere (evidence of some recent pillow fight, later an inherited favorite of a young Baker,) and the setting of the bedroom is a soft, pleasant retreat for a select few. The lack of any symmetry is a sign of constant movement, quick scene changes. The mother, the actress, would let Baker decide upon her own chromatic retreat at some other time, but for now she would live in a room of lilac and pale green, colors which a child can appreciate.

The house and its scents are now rearranged. Popcorn and cokes "Like at the cinema, Mother!" on Friday nights as Baker invites over more little girls than is probably necessary. The mother, the actress, retreats to cello colors and Wagnerian tunes. She doesn't retreat sad because her little girl is growing away. "Baker was born older than most," the mother had told the scrubbed, humming cameraman. That day she had been surrounded by friends and flowers, but not with relatives or with a husband -- not with convention.

"Post cards from exotic places, (the origins of the perfumes of the house,) come more frequently now," thinks the mother, the actress, as she accepts another one -- postage-due. The love between the two isn't restricted by stamps though; they visit on major holidays and on the few opening nights that the mother, the "more-mature actress," the realist has in now, her silver years. The post-card goes into the antique box with all of the others, most by the same author. The gilt box, given to the younger actress by a collector a long, long time ago (she never was really certain what exactly it was he collected . . . young actresses maybe?), keeps souvenirs like post cards, rarely-used keys and the latest address of Baker's father close at hand.

Baker's father came in during the second scene of Act II, only briefly, staying for Christmas. He brought with him a very dark, dark green cedar and tired, responsible smiles. Tea and oranges, peppermints, and anise flavored Lebanese liquor chased with jewel-red pomegranate seeds were the best Christmas memories and were there with the Father, the Engineer. But he had taken care of stateside responsibilities, seen to his duties and had moved on. The mother, the actress was "moved" but not in such a way as to mention it to impressionable young Baker, Baker with her mother's blonde curls and her father's dark, dark green eyes. And so the drama continues, following most of the guidelines for a well-made play and Aristotle's Poetics.

Baker grows to become a happy adult, smiling in knowing she is a success as the daughter, the artist. Cello music makes her cry and tea, oranges and small, dark green cedars are taken to her mother in the old actor's home; Old post cards are gently handled and meticulously put away with never used keys at the end of each shadowy afternoon. She smiles, "Bravo!" at her mother's curtain call, not in any way disrespectful, but from love for art, for things different and exotic, for her mother, the actress; she steps away in her black dress taking her own daughter's small hand and gives her a responsible smile, one which is reassuring to a small person as they move away from the new grave.

Back in the old house the furniture has been revamped; "Better Homes and Gardens has a New Look for Autumn!" and Baker prepares to entertain her father during Christmas. She straightens her lilac blouse; Lilac and blonde curls are something soothing and familiar, and goes to the door at the sound of the flea-market, bronze door-knocker. The door opens . . . How theatrical . . .

Epilogue: The as-yet unborn Baker, the mother, the actress, for now a college student with a passion for the exotic, tea and oranges; the father still uncast -- the entire troupe flutter in, around and out of the spirited imagination. This imagination competes in size with the big, old, oak and comfortably oiled house; finite in volume on the outside certainly, but full of corners, boxes, trunks and cupboards keeping treasures inside until their cue.

Edith Busbee

(Signet Creative Writing Award — Second Place Short Story)

THE WRECK OF THE ST. MARY

A night as black as cinder, 'twas
And raining for to kill --
The crew of the poor St. Mary was caught
Upon the waters still.
They could'na see a foot ahead,
For rain fell, oh, so thick.
The rudder'd turn not port ner stern,
The mast snapped like a stick.
The Captain stood upon the bridge
A'thinkin' 'bout the shoals
That lined the Carolina coast
And sought to steal men's souls.
The crew was in the hold below
A'bailin' for its life.
A shoal beneath did ram her hull
And cut her like a knife.
They had no time to lower boats
Before the water filled
The crowded hold with bailers packed --
Soon every cry was stilled.
And as his ship went to her death
He thought of his dear wife --
He saw her walk the widow's walk
A'prayin' for his life.
And as he sank into the brine
He sadly called her name
And far away upon a cliff
She, frightened, did the same.

Mary Lou Waterstradt

DREAM

Only miles hold me back from you
But the dream reaches out like
desperate hands that want to be held
  Only reality keeps me apart from you
But ties, like old ribbon
can be broken.
Is love just a state of mind?
Like madness or fear?
And emotion just a physical thing?
If only I could whisper in your ear
  and tell you I love you
with my mind, my heart and everything that
holds my dream together
But silence, keeps me free of broken hearts
and shattered dreams
but it's only the miles that hold me back from you.

Erin Ryan

FANTASY I

Still with you
I hover
gossamer wings --
stab of perfume
on a sultry summer night --

I hang in the air
an unanswered question --

My image
  criss-
crosses your mind . . .

I am there
floating chiffon --
yellow ribbon in my hair . . .

Tonya Wertz

Oh my God, what's taking them so long? Why don't they hurry? Don't they know what's happening here? I can't feel the beat; I can't feel the beat! God help me, I can't feel the beat!!

At that moment, my father was kneeling beside me, inhaling and exhaling air. I glanced into his eyes and saw in the returned look that he was aware that I had lost the beat. Before I could whisper a word to him, I found myself helping to crowd the dining room and family room furniture on one side of each respective room to clear a path from where my father knelt to the front door of the house.

But it did not matter. The beat was gone before they even got there. They worked though. They tried long and hard to regain the beat. But instead, all they got was a terrible ugly mess on the floor of the family room.

The following day, after a sleepless night, I arose very early. I mopped up the mess on the family room floor and applied to the floor a new coat of wax. The beat was gone and now so was the mess -- eradicated, washed away into a bucket of tepid water.

The time soon came for me to approach the box. I was disquieted and scared. But my father was next to me. His presence gave me the strength to peer over the box's side. At first sight of its contents, I was relieved, for a beautiful heart-shaped bouquet of pink roses laid inside and that was where the flowers remained when they closed the top of the box.

My four brothers carried the box. It seemed strange to me that they had enlisted the help of our next door neighbor and my father's first cousin to carry it. I knew that it could not have been very heavy, for the contents of the box were practically weightless. However, that was the way it was done. As the six men lifted the box, I saw the same look in each of my brothers' faces as I had previously seen in my father's eyes when he knew that I could no longer feel the beat.

My parents followed the six men who carried the box into the park and my three sisters and I proceeded after them. The four women each carried two long stemmed red roses which were not yet in full bloom. All of us sat down except those who carried the box and my youngest sister, Meg.

Meg immediately crossed over to where the men stood and gave one of her roses directly to Dan, my youngest brother. As Dan took the rose, my eldest brother reached out his hand to take the other one Meg held. But she did not see him, for she had already turned and proceeded to sit down next to us. The extension of Ed's hand and the glaze in his eyes said -- Where is my rose? I want to hold one too!! He jerked his face, flushed slightly in anger, towards us and then realized that one of us had a rose for him also.

A man spoke for a short time, then that was all. So my sisters and I rose from our chairs and walked to where my brothers stood. Ann gave one of her roses to Ed, Monica gave one to Tom and I gave one to Jim. All eight of us filed past the closed box and placed our flowers on the top of it. As my brothers passed the box behind us, we turned and beheld that they had also removed their boutonnieres and laid both, the pink carnation and the red rose, on the box.

We lingered only for a moment, stole one last look at the box brilliantly decorated with flowers, then drove away from the calm, peaceful park on Park Avenue in Winter Park, Florida.

In the fall of my senior year in college, my grandmother died. The date was no doubt a memorial day. It marked the twentieth birthday of my brother, Tom, the eighteenth anniversary of both the day we moved into our present home and the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

She was truly a wonderful woman who had a love for the simplicity of life. Perpetually full of good sound advice, kind words and love, she neither judged nor prejudiced anyone or anything. She possessed a surprisingly marvelous sense of humor, yet remained a true lady in all aspects of the word -- a sort of older version of Mary Poppins. But above all, she loved God, believed in Him and lived her life for Him and I hoped that the place called paradise was everything she ever trusted it to be.

And somehow, I realized that we were indeed very blessed, for she died at home, among the people she loved and those who loved her in return. She died so very quickly, before the rescue squad even got there and she died with her faculties of mind. And nothing no longer mattered -- neither the beat, the mess, the box nor the park but simply the flowers and the woman.

Loretta Callan

One clean swipe
erased
satanic black
from your conscience
Only to find the useless
reoccuring . . .
Past mistakes
reflect
only repetition

Sarah Morison

PUPPY-BLUE

So young,
childlike beyond your years;
given to moments of clumsiness,
you stumbled,
feet over head,
right into my life —
a burst of energy unbounded.
And I,
due to my basic maternal instincts,
took you in —
becoming quickly absorbed in your youth.
Clinging with a sincerity
almost smothering
you turned your puppy-blue eyes
towards me
and I was enveloped.
Consistently, unknowingly,
each time you ran away
my heart stopped.
Too free for a leash,
boundlessly wandering,
playing with my emotions like a toy,
soon I was lost in you.
I found myself anxiously waiting
for your return to my side,
breathlessly hanging at your every word.
So harmless,
yet so easily able to wreak havoc,
too innocent to know your power
to hurt.
And when you would stray too far
I would become angry,
determined to put you out
to find a new home
in someone else's life.
But then you'd return
ignorant of any wrong,
How could I be angry?
Not having found your legs yet
I excuse your clumsiness,
mistakes only the more
endearing to me.
Watching you,
curled up next to me,
comfortably casual,
lovingly relaxed,
I wonder —
for I know that someday
you'll find your legs,
And then,
you won't come home.

Mary Nethercutt

Behind
transparent
frustrating
eyes
future insecurity
non verbal
fear
anxiety
anger
appears in
"distant" touch
"fearful" expression
"blues" poetry

"It takes two
to tango
and good dancers
move
only
one
step
at
a
time."

Brenda Brockway

A milk clean complexion.
And glow-in-the-dark eyes.
The "picture perfect" bride.

I shudder.
The man in black repeats the question:
". . . speak now or forever hold
your peace . . ."

I know three years of reasons why.
Speak now . . .
Now is too late.

I missed the train and never made it up
that weekend.
You gave me a call.
You gave her a ring.

Now is too late.
"I'll love you forever"
(Words crystal sharp and outdated)

And in a breath,
Forever is gone.

S. Ashlin Looney

"THE BABY PAIN"

I stroked the hair of a friend as she cried on my shoulder. Poor kid! I thought as I held her. She soon let go and mumbled something about studying for a Calculus test, so I watched her walk to the door and then wander aimlessly into the hallway. "Hey," I called, "goodbye, pal." I shut the door.

I remember that feeling. It happened to me once and it will probably happen again. My body hated me. My head hurt. I wanted to lock myself in a closet.

I remember I took a deep breath and walked toward the metal door at the end of a hallway. Prepared to knock, my fingers curled, hand in the air and there I stood as if in a picture frozen on a frame. I noticed an exit was on my right.

Standing in the hallway, I felt younger than my nineteen years. I was ready to fall apart because of some nameless fear, a sensation. The chaplain will understand, I thought knowing that I had not even spoken with the woman before. I knocked weakly and wondered if I should pretend that no one was home.

The door opened itself into an afternoon-lit room of piles of Ms. magazine and Newsweeks and too many pieces of furniture. A line of plants stood dwarfed along a picture window. A black cat sat on the couch before me, but I knew that she didn't open the door. The chaplain was there somewhere.

"Come on in," a voice yelled from the back of the apartment. "Talk to me. What can I do for you?"

I remember staring blankly at this person standing over a stove. She was making yogurt. At the time I didn't really notice her, but she reminds me of a hippie with light socket hair. (She's really a very sensitive person.) Standing in her kitchen doorway, I whined, "Could we talk?"

As soon as the words were out, I wondered why I chose to talk to her. "Sure, pal," she replied as she covered a pot and took it off the heat. Wiping her hand on grubby jeans, she motioned me toward the living room. "Take a seat."

I walked mechanically to the picture window wondering what I was doing there. I didn't have an answer and I didn't care. All I knew was that I hurt.

I crawled across the chaplain's couch and curled up in a corner. She took a chair across the room from me. We sat in the dimness of the apartment. "So, talk to me," she said, angling her head. I don't remember much of the garbage I threw at her at first, but when I stopped to gasp, she shook her head saying, "But that's not what's wrong."

I tried again. I said something distasteful about getting married and having kids. I know I don't have to get married until I'm ready, but I told her that people keep telling me that I'll make a great mother. I said, "People paint me this picture of bliss: get married and make babies. Puke. I want to be free, thank you." That's what I told her.

Now as I think back, it still wasn't quite right. Children are okay, but having the need of them seemed like having the need of steel crutch – more of a hinderance than a help. I smile now, but then – I sat and cried. Although the chaplain knew that we didn't quite have the problem, she talked about the right to make choices. She said, "There's no reason you have to have kids."

I cried even more, because I had an ache in my left breast. Not a physical ache, it was a hollow ache. And all I could think was -- I want to have a baby. Not have one, like, give birth to; I just wanted one, like, to own, you know?

But that wasn't why I was crying. I was really crying, because I didn't want to have a baby. I kept thinking -- this is an irrational feeling. It's probably the reason that there are so many child/mothers. They don't want babies; they want someone to hold to their breasts, to relieve the ache. Logic doesn't do it.

But honestly, what would I do with a baby? I don't need someone else to be responsible for. I can barely keep up with myself. I have no time for a baby and no desire to make one. Why do I feel this need?

I had a discussion with a psychologist once and she said it was really strange the way the body would give unexplainable sensations to help people find out what was going on inside them when they didn't know what was wrong. It's the headache you get when you don't want to deal with something. Or the heartache you feel when you break up with someone you say you didn't care about. She said these feelings happen and that they mean something, but I didn't like the idea that my life was incomplete without a baby, a someone. There had to be a way out.

I remember feeling safe in the chaplain's apartment. There in the shadows I could show my pain without it really being seen. Besides, the chaplain sat across the room.

She began to ask what was happening in my life. I felt she was spoon-feeding me conversation. Gag. The topic of my life wasn't appetizing at the time. I wasn't being very helpful; I spit out the junk that was being shoved in. I could find adult words to say.

My arms ached. I just wanted something to hold, something that would need me. A little black head appeared around the corner of the couch, tarnished gold eyes and midnight fur. I thought, she must be the infamous Lilith, the chaplain's cat, but I just kept crying. My body was longing for something I knew I couldn't want.

Paws leapt up on the couch offering me a diversion. Lilith marched over and then stopped by my side as a formal intruduction drifted across the room. To be polite I passed a hand down her body, but I trembled as she rubbed a face against my arm.

Lilith marched over my chest and that funny beast lay down to nurse on my sweater. Although apologies were made for the "neurotic cat," I shook my head and smiled, stroking her. She was ecstacy: a frail body breathing against me and suck-licking my skin through the wool. The ache heightened almost pleasantly and the chaplain droned on.

"Listen," she said," In this case, you have two

choices. You act or you don't act." I drew lines in the cat's fur tearfully agreeing with her logic. Her head lowered understandingly, but her eyes shot, "Do you need a lover?"

I recall that my heart jumped. She was only following logic. Now that I think back, she must have known that intimating that all I needed was a good lay would make me mad enough to return to the real world. I kept my eyes to the floor with as calm a demeanor as I could muster. "No," I said quietly, trying to make sense of the beating of my heart, the cat, the ache.

I couldn't cry as the woman taunted me. Men were easy to find, no problem. Affairs could be arranged. She was serious. I said I didn't have time for an affair. I wasn't mad at the thought of having one then, but I held on to Lilith more desperately.

There was a long silence as the chaplain pulled out a cigarette and lit it. She leaned back propping one knee up, curling the other around. She just sat there puffing on her cigarette and watching me, waiting for me to say something. I didn't care. I hurt inside and I was scared.

She told me what my problem was. "You want someone to love. Someone legitimate." She paused as if that were the point of her sermon. "You're really scared of pregnancy, though, aren't you?" My heart skipped a beat and Lilith raised her head. With a stroke of her body she returned to her occupation. The chaplain said, "Your body is sending you a command you don't want to obey. You don't want kids, do you? Why? Why are you afraid to follow your body?"

The questioning stopped as the chaplain puffed on her cigarette again. She blew a lazy smoke ring while I let stray excuses tumble out. Most of them disappeared -- all, except one.

I remember talking to a woman who used to counsel at a home for unwed mothers. She was sensitive; I could see it in her flat eyes. She told me she quit her job after working with a nine-year-old kid. The girl's parents made her keep the baby, although she was a mere baby herself. The woman said that at nine months the girl was as big around as she was tall. The girl died in childbirth before she was ten.

I recall the woman bowed her head, in regret, I suppose. Her eyes welled up. I imagine it must have been a horrible thing to witness. I closed my eyes. Damn, that ache. I pressed Lilith to my face.

For a moment I stared at the chaplain. I wanted to yell, "What a horrible thing to do to a kid." I just mumbled, "I can't believe the pain she must have gone through." Thoughts started spinning. What about children who are starving? Or abused? I lashed out at the chaplain. "I wouldn't want to bring children into the world. There are too many unloved people walking around as it is. I wouldn't want to mess up somebody's life!"

Wearing a childish pout, I watched Lilith rise and fall with my breathing. She slid back to find a dry place to nurse. That ache! For a second, I swear, the chaplain looked at me as if she understood all. She leaned back and asked me what I wanted. In a passive silence she waited for my reply. She knew.

I couldn't want a baby. I just couldn't. Thoughts carrouselled inside me. Say it, I thought, but words wouldn't come. Say it! My mouth seemed too proud. I rocked on my leg and bit my lip. Finally, I broke down and my voice cracked like the unsure cry of a three-year-old. "I just want someone to love me until this is over."

Lilith moved away as the chaplain came over and took me in her arms. We rocked back and forth and we cried. The ache throbbed on as tears ran down my face.

After a while, our grip loosened and we both took a breath. The chaplain held my shoulders and gave me a scrunched-up smile. She said, "Pal, we don't want to have babies. We want someone to love, fair and simple." She took me in her arms again until the crying stopped.

I remember looking at the exit as I left the chaplain's apartment. I didn't want to run, but there was nothing else to say. "Hey," she said. I turned around as she smiled. "Goodbye, pal." Then she shut the door.

I think about what happened in my room today and I have to smile. I remember what it's like and it's not fun. I switched on the light by the dresser and pulled a Kleenex out of the drawer. It's okay, pal; you just want someone to love.

Pam Heinig

(Signet Creative Writing Award — Third Place Short Story)

The "Bonjour" upon entering the room --
The wooden chairs that creak
when you cross your legs . . .

Already, you feel the "stuffy" atmosphere,
as the people begin to make themselves comfortable,
for a quick snooze--

That black haired woman in the front of the room
who speaks (English)
in rare form . . .
Please, no specifics -- NOT TODAY!
Someone is snoring!
Six wads of gum under this desk --
"Excusez moi? Oui, Oui . . . "
She only has four toenails painted!
A few people awake --
"Dix, neuf, huit . . ."
11:50 -- Thank God she wears a Timex.
"Au revoir,"
until next time . . .

(I'd rather go to Russia) . . .

Brenda Brockway

SOLOMON

They was these two women,
(The Bible calls 'em "whores"
So I reckon they was)
Come wailin' before Solomon
To decide which of them two
This yere one baby belonged to.
One said it were hern
And t'othern said, no, it were hern,
'Cause the first worman had laid
On her young'un during the night
And kilt it.
They fussed and screeched
And called one another "liar"
'Til Solomon got put out at 'em,
And told 'em both to hesh.
He said to one servant
"Hand me that thar baby."
And to another'n he said,
"Run back to the kitchen
And fetch me a butcher knife.
They's only one fair thang to do,
And that's to cut the chile in two
So each worman can have half."
Well, he had the knife raised up
Over that poor little nekkid baby,
(And him just squallin' his head off)
Whilst one of them whores
Stood thar
With her hands folded over her apron
And a smirk on her face.
The Other'n commenced in to cry
And carry on, sayin' "No, don't cut 'im.
Let this yere hussy have the chile."
Right then Solomon knowed
The real mother,
'Cause God had give him the wisdom
To know a mother's heart.

Ann Matthews

A SICK ROSE

I have seen you not in your years
of blossoming from a mere bud --

I have seen you only yesterday --
with your sassy green leaves
your knife sharp thorns
and your bright blooming pink petals --
that so vitally distinguish your character
from any other

and today --
as I gaze at you while you run
across the knee-high grass,
I see a ripped leaf,
a broken thorn,
and a fallen petal.

And while I cry,
I look at tomorrow --
And the fallen petal
replanting itself into your roots,
as a new bud forms.

And for the first time I realize,
that you always have been,
and always will be
the brightest among any flower
of the green meadow,
no matter how hard it rains.

Brenda Brockway

BETWEEN YOU AND I

Between you and I
I pen these thoughts upon this page.
I have tried so hard to write a love poem about
you.
Words will not come in the images I desire.
My pen refuses to spread its ink.
Between you and I
None will be written, thought, or said.
None seem worthy of the love your face brings
to mind.
Between you and I
That worries me.
I never had this problem before
Writing love poems.
Easy, lyrical words I meant
A moment, no more.
A moment gone from my heart,
Trapped upon the page,
Chained in words.
Between you and I
There stands a wall
More formidable than your clear blue eyes.
And I'm afraid to climb it.
So I wait.
Between you and I
Those poems seem inadequate now
Next to you.
Nothing I write expresses my heart as well.
So I wait
For you to read the words springing from
my eyes,
To meet the whispered kiss blown
from my lips.
This love will not be found on paper.
It's just me loving you
From the heart,
Between you and I.

Colleen Turnage

Deja Vu . . .
That brown checkered couch
a nightmare (a cat on the prowl) that
after three years I was just getting over.
You
knew,
took a risk,
told me
"honesty was your best policy."
Another Lowenbrau?
"You might need it, sit down."
Flashback! That cat . . . it's not so passive purr–

but you were
different . . .
quiet
gentle
nervous
"attracted" to me.

You didn't think it was mutual
(the beer was affecting me)
that cat . . .
didn't enter my mind . . . anyway,
I wouldn't let myself give in
to the paws of the past
yet, I couldn't sleep
until you
convinced me
you didn't purr.

Brenda Brockway

DRESS CODE

And it doesn't seem right
that levis and tee-shirts
are taking a backseat to
khakis and buttondowns.
-That my style is unnecessary
Casual, neat, neo-sloppy is in.
-But born in the 50's
we survived the 60's
the 70's brought threats of disposal
from our parents.
Now in the 80's,
threats come from my peers.
I can still get away with my "art major" image
my art major excuse.
While my mother sends still another
monogramed sweater
("You're fighting a losing battle my dear")
another pleated skirt.
And my levis fade to white.

Erin Ryan

Tempted by the worn tennis ball,
She sits expectantly.
Waiting.
Her stubby tail giving hints of excitement.
Raising the ball above his head,
Her master throws it.
"Retrieve!"

Fast, like lightning she strikes;
Springing.
Vaulting.
Soaring.
Paws barely grazing the ground.

Sighting the prey,
She pounces upon the brush.
Returning,
Head held high, ears flopping.
The quarry securely between her jaws.
Her tail rotating like a helicopter propeller.
She faithfully drops the prize at her master's feet.

She sits expectantly.
Waiting,
Her body jiggles methodically from happy exhaustion.
Her pale tongue, slung to one side,
Drips with success.
Her eyes gleam in adoration.

Her master reaches down to pat her chestnut brown fur.
Her tongue laps his palm in respect.
"Good girl."

S. Ashlin Looney

I've heard tales before
about old sick people,
big black cars,
long lines of traffic,
giant wooden shoe boxes,
lots and lots of real roses
and sadness.
They're gloomy stories
but
they're stories,
and I just want you to know
Papa,
I'm glad
you're old and wise enough
to share these stories with me
because
they're so scarry
I wouldn't trust anybody else.

Brenda Brockway

Never assume
a child's
milky-white mind
can
forget

Because you
locked your coffin door
forever
Crystal-sharp memories
don't allow you
to conceal
all
jagged detail

Since you took
my buried identity
tell me —
were you a bride
of love
or
one
with reason?

Sarah Morison

Closest to you
at dawn when
we slip to sleep
our breathing
becomes regular --

Hours later I
awaken -- your arms
a cocoon of love
and I find I
haven't moved
since falling

Asleep - and
I'm usually
such a restless
sleeper . . .

Tonya Wertz

WENCIL AND WENCILINDA

Many years ago, there stood an old stone castle surrounded on all sides by walls of green. The existence of the castle (though deep, deep in the midst of the forest) was known by all of the people in the neighboring village.

There lived not far from the old mansion a young maiden named Wencilinda who was more beautiful than any other maiden around. With her lived her handsome husband, Wencil, who loved her greatly. One of their favorite pleasures was to take extended walks through the adventurous forest in which they lived.

One cool summer evening when all of the crickets were singing in harmony, Wencil asked Wencilinda, "How would you like to go for a walk this evening, dear?" "I'd love to, dear," replied Wencilinda.

Wencil graciously took his Wencilinda by the arm and led her down the ivy-green aisle which made a pathway delicately situated amongst the tall but frail swaying trees. Their branches draped downward as if burdened from the weight of the many blooms. Pomegranates and peaches dotted the path with happy thoughts. A scraggly wind blew tumbleweeds idly in air. The sound of chattering birds broke the peaceful silence. Continuing down the ribboning trail Wencil commented, "We must be careful not to get too close to the castle."

He explained how anyone getting too close to the castle would be changed immediately into a mouse. Wencil noticed the dying sun creeping down behind the hovering trees which cast intimidating shadows over the rugged stumps and smooth grey rocks giving the beautiful forest a new and frightening look. Ahead Wencil heard the rustling bushes and call of crickets. Traveling deeper toward the sounds, they soon realized they had gone too far. Now lost, Wencil tried optimistically to scout out their original route. Peering through the thick brush he suddenly noticed the castle only a few feet away.

"It's the witch's castle," Wencil yelled. Turning sharply, he noticed beside him his dear Wencilinda running in circles as most mice do while in a strange place. Wencil tried to catch his maiden mouse but wasn't fast enough. He now faced a glowing, sinister, dark-eyed creature swooping downward. Unable to rescue his Wencilinda, he watched the charcoal black lark carry his maiden upward and over the towering trees which barricaded the palace.

Wencil sat and cried over the loss of his dear Wencilinda. Wencil composed himself and moved closer to the thorny hedge surrounding the castle, hoping to see his dear Wencilinda. "How can I save her?" he thought. Wandering depressed through the dark woods, with only the gleam of the moon lighting his way, he made his way back to the village.

Thinking only of his dear Wencilinda he was unable to do his daily chores. He sat beneath the fathering oak tree which sheltered his little log house. Out of the vagueness of the branches above, there appeared an ice grey nightingale which whispered in his ear the secret to gaining back his lost mistress. Ecstatic with joy and still unable to concentrate on his daily chores, he set out immediately for the castle.

"Thank you so much little bird," Wencil shouted as he smiled toward the sky and dashed down the ivy path once more.

Nearing the castle, he began searching for the special rock which the nightingale had told him about. Wencil wavered and stretched, reaching over the honeysuckle and briers which grabbed and pricked at his rummaging arms. He felt the cool moist residue of the caves caressing his face as he crawled deeper into the shrubs. He stroked the ground bitterly, like a hungry dog hunting his bone.

"Could it be?", he shouted. He had found the brilliant glistening turquoise rock which would be the key to his maiden's freedom.

"All I have to do now is throw the rock into the window of the witch's castle," he thought.

"I only have one chance so I must get close," Wencil pondered. Creeping closer and closer to the web coated wall of the castle, he steadied himself for his throw. Gathering his confidence, he swung courageously and impatiently. Almost afraid to look, he spied the flight of the stone.

"It made it!" Wencil exclaimed. At once every mouse was free and changed back into a beautiful maiden. Jumping triumphantly with glee, Wencil and Wencilinda celebrated, singing and rejoicing.

Cathy Justis

Chapter One: (Getting to know each other)

Me, the rocket -- You the moon --
And while I fuel up for the journey,
I hear you kindly ask the clouds to vanish temporarily,
so I'll have a clear flight pattern.
We aren't speaking, but listening (to each other)
With electronic eye contact --

Chapter Two: (Countdown)

Take a deep breath . . . Three, two, one, TAKE OFF!
The blast brings us closer together
as I see slight satisfaction in the form of your mold.
"Time for earth connections" you say?
Well . . . just between us,
I'm flying my own route --

Chapter Three: (Time Warp)

I've lost you --
Temporarily? Permanently?
A STAR! I went through a star!
I see you now.
All of you
in full detail,
with great satisfaction shining for miles --
Now is the time for us to meet --
You know, you open up a crater,
and I push the brake and park.
It does go that way doesn't it?

Chapter Four: (Space)

You . . . have an eclipse --
And before finding the open crater,
I . . . run out of gas --

The End?

Brenda Brockway

CONTRIBUTORS

Brenda Brockway *is a senior at Queens College from Coral Gables, Florida, and is a member of Sigma Upsilon.*

Edith Busbee *is a junior at Queens College from Memphis, Tennessee.*

Loretta Callan *is a senior at Queens College from Altamonte Springs, Florida.*

Rowena Gregg *is a Junior at Queens College from Conway, South Carolina, and is a member of Sigma Upsilon.*

Pam Heinig *is a senior at Queens College from Charlotte, North Carolina, and is a member of Sigma Upsilon.*

Cathy Justis *is a senior at Queens College from Concord, North Carolina.*

Margaret Kelso *is a junior at Queens College from Charlotte, North Carolina and is a member of Sigma Upsilon.*

S. Ashlin Looney *is a senior at Queens College from Charlotte, North Carolina and is a member of Sigma Upsilon.*

Ann Matthews *is a contributor from Charlotte, North Carolina.*

Sarah Morison *is a senior at Queens College from Kingsport, Tennessee.*

Mary Nethercutt *is a junior at Queens College from Cheraw, South Carolina and is a member of Sigma Upsilon.*

Joan Oviatt *is a contributor from Charlotte, North Carolina, and is an alumna of Queens College.*

Erin Ryan *is a junior at Queens College from Reston, Virginia, and is a member of Sigma Upsilon.*

Colleen Turnage *is a contributor from Charlotte, North Carolina, and is an alumna of Queens College.*

Mary Lou Waterstradt *is a contributor from Charlotte, North Carolina.*

Tonya Wertz *is a senior at Queens College from Thomasville, North Carolina, and is a member of Sigma Upsilon.*

Cover design by **Becky Lobrano**

The Signet *would like to extend its appreciation to our patron, The Queens College Panhellenic Council.*

QUEENS COLLEGE
SIGNET STAFF
SPRING 1982

Debbie Barnes
Brenda Brockway
Terry Brown
Mary Burns
Edith Busbee
Mary Gibbs
Pam Heinig
S. Ashlin Looney
Sarah Morison
Mary Nethercutt
Karen Rollins
Karen Styron
Cathi Wilkinson
Tonya Wertz, Editor